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NEWS AND VIEWS

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CHURCH UNION

NEWS AND VIEWS

(New Series)

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Church Union

News and Views

(New Series)

"THE IDEA OF A REGIONAL CHURCH"

A recent issue of the *Indian Journal of Theology** carries an article with the above title written by the Rev. Basil Manuel of Bishop's College It is an article to be commended to the attention of all who are concerned with the current attempts to solve the problems of Christian unity, to which it is entirely relevant.

Mr. Manuel shows how the idea of a Regional Church, so far from being new, is already found in the New Testament, where the existence of the Church of God in Corinth, or the Church of the Thessalonians carried not the slightest hint that regional distinctions break the unity of the Holy Catholic Church itself. So too, in the early centuries, as the Church planted in different regions acquired characteristics appropriate to these regions, the evolution of the great patriarchates did not imply a theme of division. Indeed one might observe how, through that period, the sense of unity found expression in the formulation of the ecumenical Creeds and in other ways. At the same time the Regional Churches developed their distinctive features.

Division did indeed manifest itself, especially after the Council of Chalcedon with the separation of the "Lesser Eastern Churches", and it reached a climax in 1054 with the Great Schism between East and West which has remained unhealed till today. In the Western Church, Mr. Manuel notes that it was not till the Reformation that the idea of Regional Churches began to develop, and then in the form of an "autonomous, independent, sovereign national Church". One may further note that in western countries there emerged also bodies of believers who, for various doctrinal reasons, separated from the national Churches, though they often continued to share regional characteristics with the parent body. It is this which leads Mr. Manuel to note, indeed, that in spite of their variety, "European Catholicism and European Protestantism are but two aspects of the Regional Church of Europe".

The Churches now concerned in the Union negotiations in India and Pakistan, while enjoying regional autonomy, are all the products of the missionary activity of Western Churches. It is natural for them to treasure the links that bind them to their various parent bodies, and today that has involved for most, if not all, a place in a strong World Confessional body. The disturbing thing is that, so long as the maintaining of such links is allowed to be the dominant concern, the Indian and Pakistani Churches are bound to be diverted from the urgent problems of their own Region to attend to questions set in a very different context by the old established and strong Churches in other lands which inevitably play a leading part in such world-wide organizations. Even if they do seek to deal with their Regional problems they must do so in the weakness of their separation from others in their Region who are not of their denominational group. It would seem to be this kind of reflection which leads our writer to say:

What is at stake today in Asia and Africa is not denominational Christianity but the very Gospel of Christ".

At this point the author turns back to take up more fully his observation of the realms in which the various historic Regional Churches have found it necessary to work out the appropriate expressions of the Faith once delivered to the saints. These he had defined as:

* Vol. 9, No. 3 obtainable from the Editor at Serampore College.

The Mission of the Church, the Polity of the Church, the Doctrine of the Church, the Worship of the Church, and the thought patterns and life ideals informing and guiding the life of the Christians in their total set-up of life.

He now develops this theme in the following passage:

Thus we have in each region the Gospel, the Church, the Creed, the Cultus, and the Culture: all interpreted and understood in the light of the Revelation of God, Man and World, through Jesus Christ, Incarnate, Crucified, Risen, Ascended and Glorified, and the continuation and perpetuation of His revelation, redemption and reconciliation by the Holy Spirit in the one Church. Herein we have the theology underlying the life, mission, worship, teaching and culture of the Regional Churches. Further we also get a glimpse of how in these Regional Churches the day-to-day living of Christians in non-Christian society affected both the view of life adopted by Christians because of the Christian Revelation and the view of life and the way of life traditionally followed by followers of other Faiths.

Asia is not Europe, and even if men in the west are speaking of a "post-Christian era" they yet live there in an environment in the moulding of which Christian ideas have played a part unknown in Asia. Our lands are waiting for a Church free to devote itself unreservedly to bringing the Gospel in its power to bear upon their distinctive life. No one can imagine that the several groups of Christians in these lands, divided from each other and each a kind of outpost in "Regions beyond" of some World Confession, are ready to undertake the task. It is the hands of those who know themselves to be redeemed by one Saviour which are reaching out in urgent desire to be joined together in this common enterprise, but which are still kept apart.

That is why it is with a sense of baffled frustration that so often we are compelled to turn aside from our common task to persuade one or another of these world groups that what we are proposing is quite in order from the point of view of their particular emphasis. Yet India and Pakistan wait for their Regional Church. Perhaps the time has come when our divided groups may risk a few head-shakings and frowns from distant purists, or may accept the loss of an occasional attendance at some world-wide denominational council, for the sake of the urgent compulsion to join together with other disciples of our common Lord to serve Him in the context of these lands in which we are set to live out the Gospel. For while both Scripture and History tell us that there is an important place for the Regional expression of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, nothing in Scripture or in the Faith can support the continuance of competing world Churches, whose very conflicting claims turn into derision those great adjectives in which we confess our faith in what He has created to be His own.

Such are the reflections stirred in the mind of one reader by Mr. Manuel's article: we commend it to others that they may find where he may lead their own thinking.

The test of a Church's catholicity is always whether its testimony to Jesus Christ is the same as that of the Apostles, ' the eye-witnesses of His majesty '.

D. T. Jenkins : *The Nature of Catholicity*

Services Proposed for use at the Inauguration

A new revised edition of this booklet has been prepared, incorporating the changes agreed to at the meeting of the Negotiating Committee at Jabalpur last December, and copies will be available very soon from the Christian Literature Society, Post Box 501, Park Town, Madras 3, and, it is hoped, from other Christian book shops such as the North India Christian Literature Society, 18 Clive Road, Allahabad, and others. The price is expected to be 75 nP. as in the case of the previous edition.

Bishop Newbigin on North India

REVIEW ARTICLE

THE VEN. ARCHDEACON T. D. SULLY

The Reunion of the Church by Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, revised edition, 1960: SCM Press.

Bishop Newbigin's book was first published in 1948, and gave a very clear and helpful exposition of the theological bases of reunion, and the working out of the scheme which had led to the formation of the Church of South India in the previous year. It is of great value to have this book now re-published and available and we would commend it to all students of the way to unity.

In chapter 7 of the original book, the Bishop dealt with some of the criticisms made of the South India Scheme, and also with the alternative method then being considered under the name of "Supplemental Ordination". Modified methods of securing at the inauguration of union a completely unified ministry have since been worked out both in the Ceylon Scheme and in our Plan for North India/Pakistan; and it is natural that this feature has been commended by the Anglican Church at both the last two Lambeth Conferences as removing that which at present stands in the way of complete relations of Communion with the Church of South India. This commendation has led Bishop Newbigin in his new introduction to his book to develop his previous criticism of Supplemental Ordination, claiming that the criticisms still apply to the methods adopted in Ceylon and North India. It is important that we should face this criticism, and in doing so we may be able to bring out more clearly the real nature of what is proposed.

For the sake of brevity I shall refer to the Bishop as 'N', to his book as 'RC', to Supplemental Ordination as 'SO', and to the three schemes as 'CSI' 'C' and 'NIP'.

Supplemental Ordination

Shortly, as N puts it (RC p. xxv), it is "the attempt to combine a recognition of an existing ordination with the addition to it of something which also has the character of ordination". In chapter VII of RC, N gives the original American proposal quoted in a letter of 1943 from Bishops Palmer and Western to Bishop Azariah. (p. 110).

"The expression 'SO' is intended to imply that he who receives it is recognized to have been truly ordained to the ministry of Christ's Church, and that by the supplemental rite he receives such further grace of orders and such authority for the wider exercise of his ministry as, according to God's will, may be conveyed through the action of the Church in and by which the rite is performed".

Bishops Palmer and Western added from the Anglican point of view, "The essence of the problem is to find a way by which, on the one hand, Orders such as we Anglicans have inherited from the undivided Church should be given to those who have not previously received them; while, on the other hand, it should be recognized that their ordinations have made them true ministers of Christ's Word and Sacraments, and also that Anglican ministers should receive something more than an extention of jurisdiction such as could be given by constitutional enactment without any prayer or laying on of hands."

(a) Thus for SO there must have been already a real ordination to the ministry of Christ's Church. It differs from a "Re-ordination" which carries the implication that any previous so called ordination was not real or valid. (There is, of course a similar implication in the term 're-baptism'). It also differs from a "conditional ordination", where any previous ordination is in doubt. Yet there is something lacking or defective in that previous ordination, so that it is not parallel to the way in which the Anglican Prayer Book calls the consecration of a Bishop an 'ordination', with no implication of any defect in the ordination to the priesthood already received.

(b) It is difficult to say exactly what it is that SO adds to the previous ordination. The American statement spoke of "further grace of orders" and "authority". The

Church of Scotland in 1944 accepted a report which spoke of " the conveyance of explicit authority to each already ordained presbyter 'for the wider exercise of his ministry under the new conditions', in the faith that God gives to His servants the grace which they need for any ministry to which they are called in His Church." But clearly it is almost impossible to define what can or should be added.

(c) There is a further feature not always sufficiently noted, that the 'agent' in such a supplementing is assumed to be a Church or its ministers. The minister of one Church lacks something which another Church can supply. The supplement is thus " conveyed through the action of the Church in and by which the rite is performed " (RC p. 110). N himself notes the same assumption, e. g. (p. xxv) " if ordination is understood primarily as an act in which something is conferred by a Bishop or Presbytery upon the ordinand, then the idea of SO is intelligible ".

In a proposal made to the Episcopal Church of North America before Lambeth 1948, we find the formula used, " The ministry of the Word and Sacraments which thou hast already received is hereby recognized; and the grace and authority of Holy Orders as conferred by this Church are now added.',

We should not reject altogether the need for a Church to pass on its cherished traditions in a rite of unification; but this conception of one Church giving what others lack has contributed to the rejection of SO.

(d) N draws attention to the criticism of these difficulties in the Appendix included in the report of Lambeth 1948, though he fails to note that the same report absolves the Ceylon Scheme from the defects of the SO conception.

Incidentally this Appendix brings out the ambiguity to which I drew attention in last November 'News and Views'. While 'Ordination' sometimes is taken to mean something completely and finally given, which a man either has or has not, and which cannot be thought of as 'supplemented', Anglicans also use the term in, perhaps, a looser sense, of the ordination of a Deacon, a Priest, and a Bishop, the same person receiving successive 'ordinations'.

Further considerations

Actually it seems that in considering schemes for reunion there is general agreement about the fact from which the idea of SO seems to start, viz. that a ministry may be recognized as real, and yet in some respect be lacking, owing to our divisions. The Archbishop and Bishops in England, in commending to the Free Churches the appeal of Lambeth 1920, put this clearly,— " Ministries which imply a sincere desire to preach Christ's Word and administer the Sacraments as Christ has ordained and to which authority so to do has been solemnly given by the Churches concerned—are real ministries of Christ's Word and Sacraments in the Universal Church. Yet ministries even when so regarded may be in varying degrees irregular or defective." That this is not just an Anglican peculiarity may be indicated by the fact that at the Council of Nicaea a not wholly dissimilar problem seems to have arisen over the bishops consecrated by Meletius in Egypt. The Council did not wish to deny that they were bishops, but their consecration had certainly been irregular, and a further laying on of hands ('cheirotonia') was suggested.

Further we must insist, as N well points out, that ordination is the act of God in response to the prayer of His Church and through its ministers. It is not merely the act of the Church through some inherent authority vested in it and transmitted by human hands. Where there are defects it is not that God withholds His grace, but, as in revelation, through the hindrances interposed by weakness and sin whether in the individual or in the Church. It has been a fuller recognition of this which has changed the C and NIP schemes altogether from SO.

We must also recognize that, when we speak of a defect or limitation in our ministries, due to our divisions, it is no one simple defect involved. Nor is it necessarily confined to the sphere of a minister's jurisdiction or to the reality of his ordination, which N appears to treat as exclusive alternatives (p. xxv). Suppose a minister has been ordained by an entirely independent congregation and its own ministry, with no thought of his relation to the whole Church whether in time or place. Can we deny the fact of a difference, as compared with an ordination in which the authority of the whole Church

s fully expressed,—a difference, no doubt, which has led the Church of Scotland to re-ordain ministers of a Congregational Church coming into its ministry? There has been a imitation and there is a difference; but in our negotiations we have been led to put our confidence, not so much in the efficacy of any rite but in God Himself, trusting that in response to our prayer He, in whose purpose His Church is indeed one, can and will supply what He knows to be needed.

SO and our negotiations

We must now consider, in the light of this explanation of the nature of SO, whether N is right in alleging that the substance of the schemes in C and NIP is still a matter of SO. Let us first go back in history. N on p. 110 of his book alleges that SO was "commended with very great earnestness to the Joint Committee by the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon". He is evidently referring to the attempt made by Bp. Hubback to commend to those negotiating in South India the resolution of the General Council of CIPBC in 1944. This was a strange example of a failure in communication (of which he himself was bitterly conscious), and others besides N were convinced that what was being commended was SO. But the actual resolution ran, "we believe that when separated communions come together again, their ministries should be united by a solemn act of humility and rededication, in which through the mutual laying on of hands with prayer they seek from God the enrichment of all those ministries." Bishop Hubback wrote to me a year later, "you will remember that my plea was not for 'SO' but for the mutual laying on of hands. It was the simultaneous arrival of Bp. Palmer and Western's proposals for SO that caused the latter term to be adopted. It is a fact however that in our statement on the unification of ministries—the word 'SO' has never mentioned.....The mutual laying on of hands is the outward sign of our penitence and our prayer to God that He would repair as far as may be, our mutual defect. SO conveys the impression that we ordain (or consecrate) others and they do the same for us. That idea was not behind my plea; my idea, I hope, was that God will act, not through or by the authority of the ordaining or Consecrating Person as He normally does, but by a special and direct movement of His Grace for this particular set of circumstances."

The Joint Committee in South India rejected the plea; but it was taken up both in C and in NIP, and led to the methods of unification there worked out. By 1948 the Lambeth Conference could regard the Ceylon scheme as free from the associations and defects of SO. "There would be no use made of the phrase, and no implication of what is ordinarily meant by the idea of SO. — There would be a plain declaration of the intention to 'continue and reverently to use and esteem' the threefold ministry as it existed in the undivided Church, and to that end a recognition of the need for God, by the diverse operation of His Spirit, to supply in the case of each of the ministries concerned, whatever in the way of 'character, grace, gifts, and authority' they may in His sight require." (Lambeth 1948, p. 56). If the NIP took longer to shake itself free, it can surely claim both the intention of doing so and a considerable measure of success. It is strange that N should appear so blind to this whole development; and that, in spite of his quoting (p. xxi) the analysis made by Lambeth 1958 of the purposes of the method of unification in both the schemes, he should still be under the fixed impression that the method is substantially that of SO!

Obvious Differences

N rightly points out that for the recognition of any minister within the Anglican Church, he must (according to the Preface of the Ordinal) have been ordained within that Church, or have had "formerly Episcopal Consecration or Ordination". He claims, therefore, that for full recognition of the united ministry to be possible for branches of the Anglican Communion, the service of unification must be defined to be an "episcopal ordination" (p. xxiii). Hence he argues that a priest of the Church of England, or indeed from any other episcopal Church, will be receiving episcopal ordination for a second time, and thereby either "concurring in an official denial of the reality of his own ordination in the Church of England, or else condoning a profanity."

Has N never read the Scheme or the Plan, or has he really overlooked the statement given, with slight difference of wording, in both (NIP p. 56; C p. 25), "nor is it presumed to bestow again the grace, gifts, character

or authority that have already been bestowed upon them"? Or need we be so lacking in faith as to think that God will be baffled by the problem or uncertain as to what is needed; that He would be so careless as to supply to a particular minister something which He had already bestowed upon him on a previous occasion, or indeed that He would be open to our criticism if He should think fit to do so! This is no mere 'impatient retort'; it is an appeal to that very principle of justification by faith and not by the works of any Church, which N has been urging us to recognize through his book.

And what of N's claim that the Anglican Church must declare that the unification rite is an episcopal ordination, and that the "prayers and formulae proposed for those rites are in all essentials those of an ordination service"? (xxiv). Certainly no Anglican Church has yet made any such declaration, and, if we were so misguided as to do so, we should certainly be condemning our own priests to a repetition of their episcopal ordination. Nor would anyone carefully reading or hearing the terms of the Preface, Prayer and Formula be likely to confuse their intention with that of an ordination *de novo*.

No doubt, if we were still thinking in terms of SO we should have to think of an ex-Anglican Bishop in the rite performing an Anglican ordination, or a group of ex-Presbyterian ministers carrying out a presbyterian ordination, and so on; so that the whole rite would be a medley of ordinations. But we have sought to make it abundantly clear that this is not so. Those who, in the Representative Act of Unification of the Ministry, are commissioned to conduct the rite are no longer representatives of divided Churches, but already a nucleus of the united ministry of the united Churches of North India and Pakistan, acting, under God, on their behalf.

It is, however, not the same thing to believe that, within the rites of unification, 'episcopal ordination' will be bestowed by God if and where He sees that that is what is needed for the wider ministry of the united Church; and that it will therefore be received by those who are humbly and sincerely open to receive what God wills to give them for the good of His Church. It is that belief which has been expressed in the preamble to the resolution of the CIPBC at its General Council in January of this year, where it is said, "In leaving it to the wisdom of God to determine what is to be bestowed on each participant, which we may expect to be different in each case, it is on the human level legitimate to place different interpretations upon what God does in the Act. Thus it is our conviction that in the rite episcopal ordination is bestowed upon those not previously so ordained, though it does not repeat any ordination previously received." In using the phrase episcopal ordination, we are thinking not so much of the outward form of a laying on of a bishop's hands, as the inward and spiritual reality of the gift of "Holy Orders" associated therewith in the long and continuous traditions of the episcopal Churches. It may have been noticed that in the passage quoted from Bp. Hubback above, the Bishop was prepared to think of God as acting not necessarily by the authority of the ordaining person, but by a special and direct movement of His Grace", whether in the case of one of the separated ministries or another. The Anglican or Methodist Bishop, or the Presbyterian or Baptist minister is there, taking part in the rite, to be used only in accordance with the will and purpose of God; and as a clear sign that the uniting Churches are willing so to put their ministries at God's disposal, and that no one may doubt their intention or God's purpose of unity.

Whatever the distinctive gift which any uniting Church believes it has received from God, it seeks that this gift may be fully shared by God's grace in this act of unification. Anglicans have been concerned to see that this aspect is made so clear, that, as the Archbishop's Committee of Theologians put in it 1951, in commenting on the Ceylon Scheme, the "Presbyters thus commissioned should be accepted by the Anglican Churches as duly commissioned and authorized for the same office in the Church of God as are their own priests."

The rite so interpreted is not subject to the criticisms levelled by Bishop Newbigin, nor need the Anglican Church be convicted in the way he suggests. On the other hand the acceptance by other Churches of such an Anglican interpretation of the unification cannot be regarded as a condition precedent to the union. Differing interpretations are inevitable on the human level and while we are still living in separation. There should be no obstacle to the carrying out of God's

gracious purpose in giving what He sees to be needed, where such differences are not bare contradictions but are held within the fundamental unity of purpose, the purpose to continue and reverently use and esteem the threefold ministry in the united Church, and the fundamental intention of each participant to accept humbly from God what He is willing to give for the fulfilment of that purpose. Our whole emphasis should be on the wholly unmerited grace of God, and our faith (and not our theological agreement) as the human condition for reception. A greater theological agreement may surely follow after such a venture of faith, through the continued leading and bestowing of the Holy Spirit.

T. Donald Sully.

Presbyterian Reactions in Gujarat and in Ireland

Rev. T. Lyle

THE Editor has asked me to write about recent trends with regard to Church Union in the Gujarat and Kathiawar Church Council of the UCNI. My most convenient starting-point will be October 1958, when the Church Council, after a long and earnest debate, passed the resolution that it would accept the Plan of Union (1957 Edition) *on condition that* the UCNI Statement on the Unification of the Ministry, or some similar statement, was printed in the Plan of Union as an appendix. The purpose in laying down this condition was to ensure that, if our ministers took part in the rite of unification, nobody in India or elsewhere, whether they agreed with our point of view or not, should be left in any doubt about our true motives in the matter.

Having taken the decision, we further resolved to ask our "Mother Church", the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, what effect, if any, our entry into the Union would be likely to have on the relations between us. This question came before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in June 1959, and provoked a debate as long and earnest as that which had taken place in Gujarat. It transpired that, to some members of the Assembly, the North Indian Plan of Union seemed to be a betrayal of sacred Protestant principles. A resolution was moved which, if passed, would have amounted to a threat to withdraw from Gujarat all the support hitherto being given from Ireland, if the Gujarat Church Council entered the proposed Union. (The present support includes financial grants of over 3 lakhs of rupees per year, and the services of a number of men and women missionaries.) I remark in passing that, though some would denounce this as interference in the affairs of the Indian Church, it would, after all, be unreasonable to expect a parent Church to continue giving aid to an Indian "daughter" which, in a matter of fundamental religious principle, deliberately adopted a policy contrary to that of the parent Church. The real question at issue is, what principles are fundamental.

In the event, however, the following more moderate resolution was passed :

A. That the Presbyterian Church in Ireland could not itself enter into a union on the basis of this Plan, since in its judgement the Plan does not fully, positively and unequivocally acknowledge the validity of the sacraments and orders of any Church which has not an episcopally ordained ministry. The General Assembly, while welcoming efforts to give clearer expression to the Church's unity in Christ, could not consider, as a basis for its own action, any scheme which (either explicitly or by implication) is inconsistent with its conviction that the Presbyterian form of Church government is founded on, and agreeable to, the Word of God.

B. That in this connection the chief concern of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is the building up of the Church in India and the bringing in of the Kingdom of God in that land ; and if the Church Council in Gujarat and Kathiawar is persuaded that a United Church on the basis of the present

Plan and safeguarding the principles stated in Section A above is the best available instrument for furthering these ends in India, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland will endeavour to co-operate with the Church in India in the future as it has done in the past.

What to do now?

The crucial words in this resolution are "safeguarding the principles stated in Section A above", which must be taken to mean that, if the Church Council wishes to be sure of retaining the support of its "Mother Church", it must either (1) seek to get inserted in the Plan of Union a "full, positive and unequivocal acknowledgement" of the validity of the Presbyterian ministry and sacraments, or (2) stay out of the Union.

Faced by this difficult problem, the Church Council's Church Union Committee sent out a special questionnaire to the Sessions of all its congregations. The answers received were placed before the annual meeting of the Church Council in October 1959, and revealed that there was considerable support for suggestion (1), and also, from others, for suggestion (2), but little for the idea of pressing forward with the present Plan as it stood. It might appear that the advocates of these suggestions were simply surrendering to the threat of financial sanctions from Ireland, but in fact many of them insisted that they were acting from theological conviction, regardless of whether support from Ireland was continued or not.

In the debate, opinion was obviously deeply divided, and it would not have been desirable to decide such an important matter by a majority of a few votes one way or the other. So we resolved to hold a special meeting during the coming year to study this whole question, and postponed our decision till then. In the meantime we agreed to send a long and detailed letter, requesting our Mother Church (a) to acknowledge the ecclesiastical autonomy of the UCNI and the right of its Church Council to take their own decisions without pressure from overseas; (b) to view the matter in the light of the urgency of Christian Reunion in India, rather than that of conditions in the West; and (c) to give an assurance that, if financial support were withdrawn, this would not be done in such a way as to bring sudden destitution upon employees and pensioners hitherto dependent on funds from Ireland. We further agreed to press our request that the UCNI Statement on the Unification of the Ministry be printed in the Plan of Union.

Mainpuri and Belfast

When the UCNI General Assembly met in Mainpuri in November, it recorded its approval of the Plan of Union. It also adopted a resolution, proposed by representatives of the Gujarat Church Council, which declared, in effect, that the UCNI's acceptance of the Plan was not a desertion of its Reformed heritage. The Assembly accepted as authoritative the Statement on the Unification of the Ministry, and agreed to request the Negotiating Committee to include it as an appendix in the Plan—though of course the General Assembly, unlike its Gujarat Church Council, did not lay this down as a condition for acceptance of the Plan. (These resolutions were printed in full in "Church Union News & Views", Feb. 1960, p. 11.) As readers are doubtless aware, when the Negotiating Committee met in December it agreed to print the UCNI Statement in its own minutes but not in the Plan itself, so the Gujarat Church Council's condition was not fulfilled.

The scene now shifts again to Belfast, where the Irish General Assembly met in June of this year. A resolution was proposed, embodying the view that, no matter how the Indian Plan of Union might appear to Irish eyes, the Irish Church should not exert any pressure upon its "daughter" in Gujarat. But there was still some strong opposition, and an amendment was put forward, which condemned the Plan as a "grave departure from revealed truth", on grounds that it did not definitely guarantee that the future Church would remain Protestant. The amendment therefore recommended that, if the Gujarat Church Council entered the Union, there should be an "orderly withdrawal" of Irish personnel and financial aid from Gujarat, with due care to avoid hardship to Indian employees of the Mission.

A few months earlier the General Council of the CIPBC had issued its decision on the Plan, including the statement, in the Preamble, that "it is our conviction that in the rite (of unification of the ministry) episcopal ordination is bestowed upon those not

previously so ordained, though it does not repeat any ordination previously received". Supporters of the amendment in the Irish General Assembly felt that this proved they had been justified in regarding the Plan as a surrender by Protestants to Anglo-Catholicism.

The debate lasted several hours, but actually almost all speakers opposed the amendment and it was eventually defeated by a majority of more than 75 per cent. The original resolution was then approved, as follows :

(a) The General Assembly fully acknowledge the ecclesiastical autonomy of the UCNI, and it was not and is not the intention of the General Assembly to use financial pressure to influence the Church Council in Gujarat to adopt any policy in which the Church Council does not believe ;

(b) The General Assembly intend to continue co-operation with the Church Council in Gujarat and Kathiawar in accordance with the resolution adopted last year ;

(c) The General Assembly, in particular, since the point was specifically mentioned in a letter from the Church Council, assures the Church in Gujarat that "in no foreseeable circumstances would the Home Church allow economic injustice and physical hardship to befall orphans, pensioners or workers who have rendered long and faithful service with our Mission", through any failure to honour already accepted financial commitments.

Latest Developments

Thus when the Gujarat Church Council held its special meeting at the end of July, it had to consider its position in the light of (a) the decisions of the UCNI General Assembly, (b) the decision announced by the General Council of the CIPBC, and (c) the reply received from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. One new development of which we learned was that the UCNI General Assembly's Church Union Committee was in process of drafting a new Preface for the Plan of Union, which might clarify the attitude of the uniting Churches to such matters as the validity of ministries, and the principles underlying the form of Church government proposed in the Plan. It was hoped, we were told, that this Preface could be approved, both by the Negotiating Committee and by all the uniting Churches, and be printed in the Plan. It might thus succeed in removing the misunderstandings and uncertainties (in this country and elsewhere) which have led various Churches to issue statements about their own stand on controversial points.

Finally the Church Council passed several resolutions, of which the principal ones may be summarized as follows :

(1) As a matter of principle the Church Council affirmed its belief that it is God's will that His Church should be both spiritually and visibly one—though this does not of itself imply approval of any particular Plan of Union.

(2) The Church Council does not regard itself as bound to enter the present Plan of Union, since the condition which it laid down has not been fulfilled. But further consideration is postponed till we get an opportunity of studying the new Preface which the UCNI Church Union Committee is preparing.

(3) The Church Council expressed strong disapproval of the sentence (which I quoted above) in the Preamble to the Resolution of the General Council of the CIPBC to withdraw this statement.

The Church Council of course acknowledges the right of the CIPBC to hold and publicize its own interpretation of the act of unification of the ministry. But we have always believed there are a number of Anglicans who do not agree with the interpretation given in the Preamble, and we fear that, if the General Council's official statement is allowed to stand, *all* Anglicans will feel obliged, in loyalty to their own Church, to accept it. Moreover, if one Church maintains that, in the act of unification, ministers of all other Churches will receive a particular type of ordination which its own ministers already possess, this will surely tend to raise doubts about the intention of the act, and so increase mistrust between the Churches.

That, then, is the stage we have reached. There are many in the Gujarat Church Council and in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland who will be glad to see Church Union consummated in North India and Pakistan as soon as possible. But there are a number in both bodies who have serious hesitations about accepting the present Plan. All of us, I think, would prefer to reach a common mind rather than have our own wishes (whether for or against the Plan) imposed by a majority vote. May God enable us all to understand His will and obey it.

THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS AND THE PLAN OF UNION

Report of the North India Theological Students' Conference

IVAN W. NATHANIEL

THE chief aim of convening this Theological Students' Conference is to discuss current problems affecting the Church. This conference takes place every year, with Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, Serampur College and Bishop's College, Calcutta, participating in it. Each College is represented by a delegation of five students and a staff adviser.

This year the conference was held in Bishop's College, Calcutta, from 21st to 24th of September, 1960. The theme was "Church Union in North India" which was divided into six divisions, each College reading two papers.

The following papers were read.

1. The organization of the Church. Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur.
2. The Catholicity of the Church— Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur.
3. Baptism and confirmation— Serampore College.
4. The Laity and the local congregation— Serampore College.
5. The Unification of the ministry— Bishop's College.
6. Episcopacy—Bishop's College.

After each paper was read, the subject was open for discussions, in which the visitors were also allowed to take part. The discussions were, of course, from the student's point of view, but the staff advisers gave their opinions in the end.

There was no controversial question raised after the first paper, "The Organization of the Church" was read, whereas the second paper "The Catholicity of the Church" lacked the marks of Catholicity, and as such, questions were pinpointed on that particular point.

Serampore College started their paper with the question of "Baptism and Confirmation". Very little discussion centred around "confirmation', whereas the controversial question of 'believers' and 'infant' baptism was discussed in high spirit. The propriety of the sacrament of infant baptism was questioned and the ancient Christian initiation ceremony discussed, to clarify this point.

The paper on "The Laity and the Local Congregation" concluded with the suggestion that the laity and the clergy should be unified, because it was felt that at present all the churches are institutionalized clergy-centred and the laity become powerless. This hampers the effective witness of the Church as a whole.

The fifth and the sixth papers concerned the ordained ministry. In the fifth paper i.e. "The Unification of the Ministry" it was questioned whether the "mutual laying on of hands" would mean re-ordination or not. This point was raised due to the interpretation given by CIPBC General Council, 1960, as pointed out by the speaker. The attention of the House was drawn to the section called "Intention" in the North India Church

Union plan, that the procedure is not to be regarded, by any group as re-ordination.

The last paper on "Episcopacy" clearly explained the different theories of 'Episcopacy'. As the majority in the house was not aware of the distinction between the Anglican and Methodist episcopacy and also the meaning of historic episcopacy a few questions were directed to this end. All these things were clarified in the end.

Most of the delegates represented different denominations of the uniting Churches, except "The Church of the Brethren in India" and "The Disciples of Christ". There were also delegates who belong to CSI, Mar Thoma Church, Syrian Orthodox Church and Lutheran Church.

The papers were well prepared and were written with reference to the Proposals for Church Union in North India. The discussions after each paper were very interesting and the problems raised by different papers, were discussed from different angles by the members of different denominations. It is interesting that the delegates belonging to the churches outside the proposed union also joined the discussions without any prejudice.

The Bishop's College staff and other visitors also took part in the discussion, and especially in expounding the plan clearly whenever they thought necessary. The staff advisers Rev. Canon E. Sambayya (Bishop's) Dr. V. P. Thomas (Jabalpur) and Rev. K. V. Mathew (Serampore) were very helpful in directing and guiding the discussions, and contributing their own point of view at the close of every session. We were fortunate to have Rev. Canon. E. Sambayya, Principal, Bishop's College, as one of the staff advisers, for he could tell us more clearly the plan, himself being a member of the Negotiating Committee which met for the first time in the very hall, where the present meetings were held.

The conference indeed was very helpful, and gave mutual courage to the students in the knowledge that they belong to one Catholic Church, and as such they are fellow workers in the vineyard of the Lord. It was a rich experience for all who participated in it. The corporate worship was conducted in accordance with the different traditions. The delegates felt "that they were members according to the Will and purpose of God. They were united with the Head of the Body through the various means of grace, which He has provided in His Church, and through Him they are united in fellowship one with another."

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: 1961 Jan. 18 to 25

It is suggested that, as last year, in joining in the observance of this Week of Prayer, we may specially pray for God's guidance in regard to our Plan of Union in North India and Pakistan on the Sunday which falls in the week, that is the 22nd January, 1961.

Copies of the Prayer Leaflet for this Week will be obtainable from *the Secretary, NCC; Christian Council Lodge, Nagpur, 1.*

Heads of Churches and others who will need a number of copies are asked to inform Dr. E. C. Bhatty as early as possible of the number they may require, so that he may secure a sufficient stock. It may be possible to provide a Hindi version also.

The leaflet is issued by the World Council of Churches, and the Week is being very widely observed.

Daily Prayer for the Week:

O God our Father, whose Son Jesus Christ said to His Apostles, 'my peace I give to you, my peace I leave to you', regard not our sins but the faith of thy Church, and grant to it such peace and unity as is in accordance with thy will, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who livest and reignest one God in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and ever. *Amen.*

QUESTIONNAIRE

Concerning the Administration of Holy Communion to Churches in Rural Areas

Editor's note: We are glad to give publicity to this document by means of which its author is seeking to gain a clearer picture of a problem before the Negotiating Churches.

1. How frequently do you consider it desirable to celebrate Communion?

2. In actuality how frequently does the average RURAL church in your area observe Communion?

3. At a rural Communion Service in your area what would you say is the average proportion of attendance—i.e. what proportion or percentage of the communicant membership of the church?

4. What materials for the Communion elements are actually used in rural churches of your area? Does your Church prescribe rules in regard to this matter?

5. (a) Who are permitted to celebrate Communion in your churches? Does your Church have any system of temporary licensing of lay people to celebrate Communion? If so, by what authority, and to what kind of people are such licences normally issued?

   (b) Is it difficult in your area to find people whose character is sufficiently unblemished that they could celebrate Holy Communion without causing offence?

6. Does your Church permit its ministers to administer Communion to any communicant Christian (in good standing) whether a member of your Church (Denomination) or not? If your Church practises Confirmation, is it nevertheless prepared to administer Communion to a baptised Christian in good standing who is not episcopally confirmed? Whatever the normal procedure of your Church may be, are its ministers permitted a measure of freedom and discretion in regard to this matter?

7. In regard to DISCIPLINE does your Church temporarily suspend offenders from Communion? If so, is such discipline more common in regard to RURAL rather than town churches?

8. In your Church (Denomination) what is involved in Ex-communication? Is such a sentence more common in RURAL churches rather than in town? If so, what would you suggest as the reason?

9. In your churches who is permitted to order: (a) sentences of temporary suspension from Communion? (b) the sentence of Ex-communication?

10. In your experience of rural churches is Communion regarded with sufficient respect and reverence as to make a suspended member NORMALLY seek re-instatement as soon as possible?

11. If in your churches only *ordained* celebrants are permitted, what suggestions can you make for the adequate observance of Communion in a scattered village area,—say, among tribal churches where there would be only one ordained minister for twelve scattered and inaccessible churches?

12. If you know of any problem affecting Communion and RURAL churches which is not touched on in the above questionnaire please give details briefly.

N. B. Please find time to answer these questions, and send your replies to:—
Rev. B. C. R. Henry, Sunapanga, P. O. BALLIGUDA, Dt. Phulbani, Orissa.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

"Sunapanga,"
P. O. Balliguda,
Dt. Phulbani,
Orissa.

9. 9. 60

The Editor,
Church Union: News and Views.

Impressions

Dear Sir,

I am obliged to correct something in the letter from Dr. E. C. Bhatty which you published in the May 1960 edition of *News and Views*. Whilst both the specific cases in which he criticised my previous article are questionable, I will confine my remarks to his second point of criticism, i. e. concerning the administration of Baptism. Dr. Bhatty not only misquoted me but denied the truth of my remark. He went on to say:

> ".....the Plan having accepted fully the plea that the minister for both Sacraments should be an ordained minister only."

I cannot find clear support for this in the Plan, as the references to the administration of Baptism do not appear to require an ordained person only. Page 7 of the Plan, para 9 merely refers to "a minister" ; also, on page 15, para 10 we read: "Presbyters are specially.....commissioned by God to be dispensers of His Word and Sacraments." But that statement does not exclude the unordained from administering Baptism.

In regard to Holy Communion the Plan is explicit. By a rule of order "the celebration of Holy Communion shall be entrusted only to those who have by ordination received authority thereto." No such clear statement is made in regard to the administration of Baptism.

The actual remark in my article was: "Mercifully the Plan appears less particular regarding who should administer Baptism!" I think, therefore, that it was a legitimate remark.

Yours faithfully,

Bruce Henry.

S. P. G. Mission,
Kolhar,
Ahmednagar.

7. 10. 60

Episcopalian and Presbyterian Orders

Dear Sir,

One is saddened as well as surprised to see denominational apologetics reappearing in connection with re-union. We are not aiming at inter-communion, but at Organic Union. What is needed for this generation is a vision of the Church in India, not a recapitulation of our several lines of development. The latter have been drawn by many able pens and we are well aware of them. In particular, no Anglican is demanding a monarchical "Prince Bishop", while at the same time Presbyterians assert, and indeed insist on, their own episcopacy. The Church in India will have need of every means of grace which its components can bring to it, from Baptism to Ordination, and the Holy Spirit has manifestly worked through Diocesan Bishops as well as through Presbyters: both have a place in re-union. Let us by all means seek to know and to value the springs from which we draw our denominational life, but let us remember also that they are flowing down restricted channels in our present state of unhappy division.

Yours faithfully,

R. H. S. Hall.

Chandraghona, C.H.T.
E. Pakistan,
16.10.1960

Baptist Decision in Pakistan

Dear Sir,

I do not think I am alone in a sense of disappointment and frustration that, at least so far as the Baptists of East Pakistan are concerned, the day of corporate Church Union seems to have been pushed into a distant future. Enthusiast for Church Union though I am, I cannot but admit that there was no alternative for them but to reject the Plan as it stands. All this has led me to

wonder if we are not making an entirely wrong approach to our task.

To put it starkly: we are saying that we will follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, but only on conditions. We draw up our plans: and then we in our various communions, scrutinize the plans. We look carefully not only at the intention but the very wording of the plans, as though we were entering into some legal agreement, and were terribly afraid of being cheated. Sometimes, to hear the kind of discussion that goes on, one would think that Church Union was a matter of bargaining, each party striving to "give" as little as possible.

I suggest that we should alter our priorities radically. If we believe that it is indeed the Spirit of God who summons us to Church Union, why should we hesitate and delay? Why should we make objections and hedge Church Union about with conditions? Let us begin now with an act of Union.

A constitution is a good thing for a church, but surely not an essential. Why not draw up our constitution afterwards, when we have been worshipping together, working together, partaking together of the Lord's Supper? If we believe that we are following the leading of the Holy Spirit, then we may trust Him to lead us on into all truth. We may be confident that those truths which God has vouchsafed to our forefathers will not be lost. But obedience is the first essential.

This must seem very naive to many who have been wrestling hard with the problems involved in Church Union. I feel it must also seem ungrateful to the members of the Negotiating Committee who have given so much in time and thought and prayer. But because I am so sure that corporate Union is the will of God for His people at this time, I throw out this challenge.

Yours faithfully,

J.K. Skirrow.

Book Reviews

Worship and the Church's Mission and Unity: (available from the Rev. J. R. Chandran, Union Theological College, 17 Miller's Road, Bangalore, 1. or from Tract and Book Society, St Mark's Road, Bangalore, 1: Rs.1. 50 or Rs. 12.00 per dozen, postage extra.)

The third Indian Conference on Worship organized under the joint auspices of the East Asia Theological Commission of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Study Commission of the NCC met in May 1960. The booklet under review includes the *Agreed Statement* on Worship issued by the Conference and some of the papers that were read at it.

The Agreed Statement has three main sections. In any agreed statement there is inevitably much that is trite and hackneyed. Sometimes, however, the preparatory papers fill out the subject, and this is noticeably so with regard to the linking of worship in households with the worship of the Church, where the papers of Rev. E. Wangsjo on "Family Worship" and by Rev. B. F. Tillander on "A Church Calendar for India" develop fresh ideas.

The second section on Worship and the Mission of the Church includes a cautious consideration of Common Worship with non-Christians, and recognizes that there is a challenge to the Church for creatively trying to see if a dialogue between Christianity and other living faiths in terms of common worship is possible." Unfortunately we look in vain among the papers printed for a development of this daring and controversial thesis: perhaps the statement did not arise from any prepared paper but out of creative discussion within the conference.

The third section on "Indigenization of Worship" does not seem to take us beyond the oft-repeated generalizations on this theme, and apart from the paper on "A Church Calendar for India", mentioned above, there is nothing in the preparatory papers to lift us out of the arid theorizings to a review of practical and actual expressions of indigenous

worship. Indigenization is spoken of as something to be experimented with. But surely indigenization, if it is to be real and not artificial, must be something that grows freely. There have in fact been such spontaneous expressions of Christian worship in Indian idiom, especially in the sphere of lyrics and of song gatherings. These may at times lack theological depth and at times be rank and disorderly, and not always commend themselves to those who emphasize forms. Real indigenization, however, will come by the guiding of such expressions of life rather than by experimenting with forms into which life has to be pumped.

The failure of the report here may be linked with the too easy assumption that Hindu worship is at best collective in contrast with Christian corporate worship. Does such a judgement do justice to the intenseness of *kirtan* worship in Bengal, where the leader and the congregation sway and sing and dance to a rhythm which seems to weld them into one body? Was the Conference's failure to appreciate this due to the fact that the whole of North-east India was virtually unrepresented at the Conference?

Again, the whole range of discussion seems to be bounded within a discussion on the framing of liturgical forms. Papers by the official Roman Catholic observer and by the Rev. T. S. Garrett on liturgical developments in the Roman Church and the Church of South India are very interesting. But the objection to which the Rev. M. A. Thomas refers in his paper, that God does not need or expect our prayers, is not dealt with in the *Agreed Statement*, and his own answer, though good for the theologically minded, is not likely to mean much to those who feel this objection. A much more radical answer is needed if the general run of laity are to feel that worship can mean much to them—or to God.

To the present reviewer—belonging to a denomination quite unrepresented at the Conference—there seems an over-emphasis on worship as being expressed in forms that can be written down. There is no consideration of those forms which cannot be written down, and no discussion of the training needed to help those who conduct worship—whether liturgical or non-liturgical—to make it the worship which God desires, i.e. worship in spirit and reality. There seems to be no understanding of the kind of worship that is alive because the leader has an intense prophet-like awareness of the Divine Presence and an intense pastoral awareness of the needs and moods of the congregation. Further, a section that deals with Worship and the Church's Mission should surely take account of the spontaneous prayer meeting of a group, knit with a common evangelical purpose and united in the One Name.

The Conference has provided useful material for study within the churches, but within a limited framework. May we hope that the studies which this conference sought to initiate may be taken up by a wider range of people (both denominationally and geographically) than was found in the Conference, and may go beyond trying to marry church traditions and indigenization. There is need to study the actual spontaneous responses of Christian Indians in their devotion to the living God.

E. L. Wenger

The C.S.I. — Lutheran Theological Conversations: Agreed Statements.
CLS, Madras Re. 1/-.

To those of us who are inclined to be discouraged by the uncertain course of the North India Church Union Negotiations, this is a heartening document. In a brief factual introduction the Rev. J.R. Chandran summarises the history of theological discussion between the representatives of the CSI and the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India at various levels over the past twelve years. There follow a series of five "Agreed Statements" on "The Relation of Doctrinal and Confessional Statements to the Being of the Church", "The Law and the Gospel", "The Doctrine of Election", "The Lord's Supper", "The Church and Ministry." Finally there are more detailed Appendices giving various stages in the discussion on Church and ministry.

The "Statements" represent a significant work of the Holy Spirit in revealing a unity of outlook where previously irreconcilable differences had been supposed to exist. One is left with a keen sense that this document is not the result of compromise or negotiation in favour of this or that preconceived position, but the fruit of mutual waiting upon God.

While Mr. Chandran disclaims the suggestion that the Agreed Statements could be

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